

Libraries and the Coming of "Workshops"

This summary of the relation of the libraries in teacher training institutions to the currently popular "workshops" was prepared at the request of College and Research Libraries by Miss Welch, who is librarian of Illinois State Normal University at Normal.

WORKSHOP" has become a widely used term in today's education. It signifies an idea to which the conference, the institute, the meeting, the clinic, the discussion group have given way. Loosely used, the word can apply to any session for discussion of problems. Such a session may last from three days to twelve weeks. Usually it is held in the summer, taking the place of the customary summer school.

Workshops seem to have crept upon libraries in educational institutions without making much impression upon them. Perhaps this is because librarians are so used to experiments and shifts in educational method. We have lived through the period when the lecture was the proper technique. We have seen lectures give way to "practica," where the criterion was the "practical nature" of the course with "practice" by students. We have seen the seminar fail because it signified too much research and smacked of European influences. The "project" is fading. The "curriculum laboratory" has not been accepted generally. The "activity school" is still a popular form. "To learn by

doing" has come into as much favor in the college of education as in the elementary school. This, coupled with the recognition of "individual needs," has produced the workshop. The name tells the community that the teacher is a worker, part of the world's labor; that Shaw is wrong when he says, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." Unfortunately, this cliché has been too often believed, and now the term "workshop" has come into popularity to disprove it. The teacher works and like any other worker needs a shop in which to learn his job.

The workshop came into existence in the summer of 1936, when at Ohio State University a group of thirty-five experienced teachers met for six weeks for a curriculum in science and mathematics for the high school under the aegis of the Eight-Year Study of the Commission on the Relation of School and College of the Progressive Education Association. Representatives of other important studies, viz., the Commission on Secondary Curriculum, the Adolescent Study, and the Commission on Human Relations, took part. The scheme developed phenomenally. Each succeeding summer, East, West, North, and South, more and more workshops came into being. Discussions of their advantages began to appear in 1938, and since then over 134 articles have been printed in the more important educational periodicals. The articles are

full of the advantages the participants (those attending are "participants," not "students") have had in free discussions in groups with like background, in solving like problems, in increased understanding of community situations, and in renewed personal life. But there are surprisingly few references to books and libraries in this literature; to be specific, only some twenty-four references of any importance. Is it because books and ideas in other forms of print are taken for granted; or is it because the leaders are somewhat iconoclastic, believing, to quote one of them, "that to a particular community almost all needed resources are available. Books are used to lend dignity to a graduate course and to make some people happy who weren't ready to learn that education comes from solving real problems rather than from reading about how to solve them." Does he forget that unless new notions come into the community, either through print or the inspiration of a leader of wide vision and reading, it cannot change nor can it solve its problems? As Mr. Vitz says, "Books are merely the package which contains all ideas." With infrequent reference to books, the participants will have few ideas to digest and the summer may become a talkfest or a playground.

Technique of the Workshop

The technique of the workshop does not present a uniform pattern nor is it a complete revolution in educational practice. There have been many attempts to make learning functional by utilizing a variety of methods and the total resources of the community and of the college, and many to integrate theory with the daily needs of the job in a particular school.

The workshop method seems most use-

ful in two situations, the first being that of the experienced teacher who comes back to college to complete study for a bachelor's degree or to do graduate work after years in the classroom. To this type of mature student the conventional class, based on recitation, assigned readings (not always up to date), and lectures by an instructor long removed from the public schools, who may talk glibly of an outmoded "ideal school," has little to offer beyond credit. The participant comes to the workshop for light on special problems that have grown out of his actual classroom. He wants to know about vocational guidance, about special tests, about building a practical curriculum in some given subject, about the effect of this war on adolescents, about school child health problems, about the wider use of collateral materials, or about the use of nonschool community resources in the classroom. He frequently comes not only for himself but as a representative of his school system. He is to take back from his summer workshop the solutions for definite problems. To provide these, the workshop, according to the participant, must possess the following characteristics. It must have flexibility of organization. It must proceed without the fixed syllabi of the conventional classroom. It must place its emphasis on the problems and needs of the individual student. The unified cooperation of the instructional staff and of the resources of the college must be at the disposal of the participant.

How does the college library fit into the picture? What changes has the technique brought about in the library's method? For an answer to this, letters were sent to the libraries of the teachers colleges most frequently mentioned in the literature on the workshop. The con-

sensus of opinion secured was that the workshop groups involved were so limited in relation to the student body as a whole—not more than 100 in any session—that no change in library policy was justified. Such groups should, of course, have library service but not undue attention—no more than the proportion offered any other section of students on the campus.

Five of the colleges questioned had been offering workshops since 1939. In three cases the library was unaware there was to be a workshop until the day it began. In eight the librarians or some members of the staff were on the “planning committees.” In these instances the librarians knew the probable scope of the problems to be treated. Librarians and leaders discussed the library holdings in the fields, where the collection was weak, what new items to secure in time to be of use. In two cases workshop leaders acknowledged the librarians’ help and indebtedness to their bibliographic knowledge of the fields to be covered.

Special Collections

In five instances materials chosen as pertinent to the problems of the workshop, such as books and pamphlets on the high school curriculum in home economics, the health of the elementary child, and social science materials for junior high schools, were arranged in seminar rooms before the groups arrived. One library reported the transfer to the workshop conference room of 2500 courses of study, sample textbooks, and tests to be used in the workshop or to be checked out as the students decided. This collection was added to as need arose for special materials. Of course at the same time all other library resources were available to the workshop.

In four instances alcoves or tables in

the reference room were set aside for the special use of participants. On these tables were displayed books and periodicals with marked articles for quick consultation. In a few instances collections of library holdings were sent to other buildings on the campus or nearby. In one it was to the student union, in another to a center on a lake fifteen miles away. In such cases there were complaints that often desired references were lacking and that it took too long to get them. As a result, the work was delayed or interest was lost. In one college a suite of rooms was set aside for the workshop. One of the rooms became the library, “with a good work collection transferred from the department and the college library.” Here were bulletin boards for reviews of books, for book lists, and for student comments on pertinent articles, all under a library committee of participants. It was, in fact, a small library of its own.

These out-of-the-library deposits were made from duplicate library holdings or with the understanding that materials would be called in if needed by other college groups. Wherever the special collections were, they were available at least seven hours a day and usually for all the hours the library building was open, an average of fourteen hours daily. One college library was arranged in such a way that the seminar room used by the workshop could be made available on Sunday when the rest of the building was closed. Other libraries made no special room arrangements for the workshop groups.

The materials employed vary greatly. Two libraries reported the use of library-owned records and films; two others say records were used but owned by the in-

structors. As a whole, 55 per cent of the printed matter consulted was in book form. The other 45 per cent was courses of study, textbooks in use in the public schools, and state and federal pamphlet material. When the problems touched the community, heavy use was made of publications of the state agricultural division and of the United States Department of Agriculture. One librarian of a state university reported that all books and other printed materials on hand were, as far as he knew, the property of the instructors. They preferred to use their own, with which they were familiar. Otherwise, about 65 per cent of the materials were library owned; the rest, either the property of the workshop faculty or of the college departments involved. This latter is made up of advanced copies of new titles or ephemera. It is the sort of material that is mimeographed, such as collections of course descriptions, evaluation instruments, experiments in a particular school system, and personnel forms, much mention being made of government reports and pamphlets.

Librarian Assigned to Workshop

In but one instance was a librarian assigned to give part-time service to the workshop, though all libraries indicated some conference with workshopers. One librarian writes, "These workshops came into existence when our enrolment was low and our staff still intact. Perhaps later we might need extra help." In four cases the workshop group chose a number or a committee of the workshop to bring in new material, and this individual or committee was responsible to the library for its return. In each case the group made its own rules, and "so there was

no feeling of authority." This feeling of constraint is more irksome to mature students attending summer schools than most librarians realize.

When new items were bought for the use of the workshop, in four cases the money came from the college fund set aside for the summer workshop; in one, from a fee of a dollar charged each participant in the workshop; in another, from the library budget of the college department. In all other instances the money was from the general library fund.

In no case was a separate record kept of the use of materials. One library added the statistics to those of its branches, and in all other instances the circulation record was part of the general college circulation statistics. Of course, the very plan of the workshop means frequent use of material in groups for discussion purposes and seminar room consultation. It is the type of heavy use librarians all hope for but cannot estimate in circulation numbers.

Special Exhibits

Some libraries report special exhibits of materials for the workshops. At times it has been recreational books for the leisure time of the workshopers (if they have any); or titles that would interest their pupils, such as health books on the elementary school level or volumes on home decoration for high school home economics pupils. In two cases a library assistant was in attendance an hour or two a day to suggest other titles and to aid buying for the home schools. One library arranged for book luncheons for the workshop. Here titles of certain types for elementary schools were discussed, one day being given to books of travel, another to aviation books, another to vocational

material, another to books for a special grade, or another to picture books for young children.

What do the participants say of the library service of the workshop? Not a great deal. But a goodly number report that they find themselves using a greater variety of source material (by this they mean maps, movies, government pamphlets, magazines) when they return to their jobs because of their touch with the workshop library. Others regret "the lack of time during the summer to digest the book resources in our room." Another feels the "need of someone whose job it is to know children's books so I can talk about my children's reading." Several report they have compiled lists of books they really want to read during the winter, while another says, "I've always been afraid of all the library has until this summer, when we had the books I needed in one place." One of the failings of the workshop was, in several students' eyes, the fact that there was no one to show them ways of using the library quickly without waste of precious time.

Since the problems under consideration in all the workshops reporting dealt directly with public school situations and since in most cases the practice schools of the college were laboratories, the libraries of the demonstration or practice schools were used heavily. In some instances they transferred collections to the workshop rooms. In all cases the pupils were watched to see what they read and how. At some places the workshopers had interviews with pupils as to their tastes, their purposes, and the amount of their reading. Many times the practice school librarian had more contact with participants and gave more aid than any other librarian on the campus.

Off-Campus Workshops

Such is the picture of the campus workshop. There is, on the other hand, the off-campus workshop that is taking the place of the familiar extension class or the short-term teachers institute. The technique seems especially fitted to give some training to the emergency worker or to the largely unprepared rural teacher. Every part of the country today has large numbers of semitrained new teachers or instructors returning after the lapse of years to the classroom—all teaching on emergency certificates for the duration of the war. This year Kentucky alone has 2200 such persons. They have little money for going to school, little grasp of present-day school needs, and less vision of what a modern school should be. Public school leaders have asked the schools of education in their vicinities to send instructors to convenient centers to conduct workshops, hoping in this way to give through in-service education some acquaintance with teaching materials and through study and discussion of actual classroom problems to convey an awareness of the school and the community. Such centers rarely have adequate libraries at hand. The instructors must gather them. Ordinarily what can be secured is a combination of books from the local public library, the local school library, the school administrator's office, the libraries of the instructors, and the sponsoring college library, plus perhaps a few gifts. In some cases the collection is good, though usually it is lacking in reference material. It was found in the off-campus workshops in both Kentucky and Michigan that more planning was necessary before the group met than when the workshop was on a college campus. During the years when a li-

brarian was a member of the planning staff the situation was relatively satisfactory. No matter how well the instructors may see the students' library needs, the material must be obtained; and when someone with library training is in charge of securing the material, it is used more and to better purpose. From Kentucky, Dr. Seay, director of the Bureau School Service of the University of Kentucky, wrote in 1943 regarding the off-campus centers:

We have found it very desirable to add our special library collection to whatever library facilities are available in the communities. In the workshop which I am to direct this summer we shall place our library in with the high school library.

We have had no difficulty in keeping our workshop library open and available throughout the day. We simply keep it open all the time when students are there, with at least one staff member present. In fact, we so plan our library that a very large part of the time of all the students is spent in it. I might be more correct to say that the library is not a separate feature of the workshop but that it is woven into the entire plan. We have two or more rooms set up with tables and chairs and our library materials. Except for the group meetings and individual conferences and for the time when teachers are observing in the demonstration school, the students are working in these rooms where the library materials are available.

This is a setup very like that of on-campus groups. After the workshops were over, the collected material was kept in a library for teachers in the county seat or distributed among the various schools of the section.

For Michigan, Miss Beust has reported that:

Students' contacts with the library through the workshop and all the services that the library could offer them increased

their interest in library work. In fact out of the workshop at Charlotte, Mich., there grew a county-wide library association. The librarian worked with the elementary and high school teachers, the workshop students, and the faculty.

Conclusions

There are several lessons that can be drawn from this sketchy picture of the workshop on and off campus. There is little mention of books and libraries in educational literature on the subject, either because our services are so familiar they are assumed or because the leaders of the movement feel that "the librarian trained to get and classify material in the forlorn hope that someone might need it, could have put the whole program on the college campus level where all the answers could be found in books and no one disturbed by it." If there is any bit of truth in this quoted statement, it is time college librarians hid the mechanics of library housekeeping. It is time they showed an alert interest in the material in books, in people, in teaching problems, and in community betterment. It is time we ceased to be interested in circulation figures but became interested in answering the needs of our students' jobs through books—even if it means for us the reading of many books on the curriculum and on health and on child psychology. It is time we made our coworkers and our students feel our willingness to experiment. Whenever a new "ism" springs up, be it in religion or economics or education, it is because a particular phase or emphasis has been lost to sight in current thinking. The workshop stresses personality and informality—the easy personal approach to the instructor, the importance of the personal problems of the individual student, and

(Continued on page 181)

and praiseworthy, but to raise so much in theory may result in no raise in practice. Administrators and boards of trustees will be hard-pressed to use the committee's minimum and maximum figures as a yardstick to measure current salary schedules. The theory is so far above the practice that the theory may be discarded as sheer wishful thinking. Optimism in planning for the future is good. But when suggested minimum salaries are as much as 50 per cent above normal current salaries, they would seem to me millennial salaries.

But despite its several acknowledged shortcomings, the classification and pay plan, if utilized, is a valuable contribution to the library profession. The committee has prepared a comprehensive and detailed plan by which a librarian can evaluate the personnel and organization of his library.

The plan emphasizes an impersonal and scientific approach to the problems of classification of positions and salary schedules and such an approach is as essential to good administration in libraries as it is in business, industry, and government. The plan is sufficiently flexible to cover the many variations in library organizations which exist even in institutions of comparable size and function. It represents a synthesis of years of library administration of the highest caliber. It provides an excellent opportunity for librarians to evaluate their organizations by tested methods. If its potentialities remain unrealized, the fault will be with library administrators and not with the committee whose efforts have produced an opus worthy the serious consideration of every librarian.

Libraries and the Coming of "Workshops"

(Continued from page 147)

the solution of these problems through informal contact with people with like difficulties. In the past the use of books and the truths in them have been objective. We have felt we must keep the library and its services impersonal. We now must take our wares from the formal atmosphere that can be so deadening. We must make our libraries warm and inviting. We must be willing to cooperate, to make education and educational ends interesting, not boring. Now that we are not so oppressed with great numbers of students, we must not be so busy about many things that we cannot talk over problems and books informally with any

student. We must simplify the approach to ourselves and to our stock. While the workshop as yet may not be of enough importance in the college picture as a whole to change methods and techniques of library service, it is showing us that the librarian must be approachable enough to contribute to new ideas and to student problems from his own research, his own experience, and his own thinking. He must have time to show a path through the library material that will help the student to reach his answers as easily and quickly as possible. To paraphrase, he must make "print as exciting and as easy as sin."